

THE BACCHAE

65

On flying feet they came, his
mother blind.
And Agave and her sisters and behind
All the wild crowd, more deeply
maddened then.
Through the angry rocks and
torrent-tossing glen,
Until they spied him in the dark
pine-tree :
Then climbed a crag hard by and
furiously
Some sought to stone him, some
their wands would fling
Lance-wise aloft, in cruel targeting.
But none could strike. The
height overtopped their
rage.
And there he clung, unscathed, as
in a cage
Caught And of all their strife no
end was found.
Then, "Hither," cried Agave ;
"stand we round
And grip the stern, my Wild Ones,
till we take
This climbing cat-o'-the-mount!
He shall not make
A tale of God's high dances I"
Out then shone
Ann upon arm, past count, and
closed upon
The pine, and gripped : and the
ground gave, and flown
It reeled. And that high sitter
from the crown
Of the green pine-top, with a
shrieking cry
Fell, as his mind grew clear, and
there hard by
Was horror visible. *Twas his
mother stood
Over him, first priestess of those
rites of blood.
He tore the coif, and from his head
away
Flung it, that she might know him,
and not slay
To her own misery. He touched
the wild
Cheek, crying : "Mother, it is I, thy
child.
Thy Pentheus, born thee in Echton's
hall !
Have mercy, Mother ! Let it not
befall
Through sin of mine, that thou
shouldst slay thy son !"
But she, with lips a-foam and eyes

that run
Like leaping fire, with thoughts that
never should be
On earth, possessed by Bacchus
utterly.